

## **A religious retreat wants to reinstall the structure it was told to remove.**

### **CUPOLA, CROSS EVOKE MADEIRA BEACH FIGHT**

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After a contentious neighborhood zoning dispute in 2005, a small cupola topped by a cross was taken down and stored away.

Now four years later, Father Cassian Newton, formerly known as **Miller Newton**, wants the city to let him put the cupola back on the chapel roof of his Christ at the Sea Foundation religious retreat.

The converted home at 13280 Fourth St. E and the foundation-owned duplex next door operate as a temporary residence and prayer center for members of the Orthodox Church of Antioch. Currently, seven people are living at the religious complex.

The cupola in question was the trigger for a zoning dispute in 2005. Neighbors circulated a petition demanding the cupola be removed and that the property owners not be allowed to operate a church at the site.

The zoning controversy was further complicated when former clients of the Straight Inc. drug treatment program crowded city zoning hearings to protest **Newton's** involvement with the program.

The controversy ended after **Newton** successfully sought a special exception to continue operating the religious retreat.

But, as part of then-Special Master Herbert E. Langford's ruling, **Newton** was ordered to remove the 51-inch cupola and 38-inch cross from the chapel.

The order allowed the foundation to keep three other long-standing crosses and a sign, but specified that "no additional signs nor symbols of any type shall be added to the property's exterior."

Langford also ruled that "by all outward appearances, the property is residential to maintain its compatibility with the neighborhood and character of the area."

Last month, City Attorney Michael Connolly said reinstalling the "cupola with a cross is not consistent" with Langford's June 2005 ruling.

**Newton** said Tuesday he has informed his immediate neighbors of the foundation's intent to reinstall the cupola on the chapel roof.

"I don't think we will have the same problems. We had a lot of neighbors apologizing to us for being misled into signing the petition," **Newton** said.

He said the cross and cupola have been in the garage too long.

"The cupola was a donation from one of our supporters and his feelings were hurt when we had to take it down. We are trying to correct that," **Newton** said.

The cupola would be placed on the rear of the chapel roof, about 15 feet farther back from its original location. **Newton's** application points to five similar cupolas in the area, including one that has a cross.

Paula Cohen, the city's planning and zoning director, said **Newton's** request requires a special exception and cannot be approved unless first reviewed by the city's Planning Commission and subsequently agreed to by the city's current special master, James Denhardt.

The Planning Commission is scheduled to meet on Oct. 12.

**Newton's** request could be heard at the following special master hearing on Oct. 26, according to Cohen.

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